

# The Detroit Free Press

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## NORTH SHORE

by  
Wallace Irwin



AN OLD Chinaman, spading around flower-beds, sang a tune aimless and wandering as the history of his young Republic; languorous twilight was settling over the Rancho San Hernandez, an early twilight, brought gently in by a high fog. The smallish girl in gold-pipe bracelets and a strawberry-colored sweater had the air of nothing much to do as she rambled down a crooked path. Her eyes were dark, but not the languorous sort; perhaps that was because her eyelids peeked slightly upward, suggesting question marks.

This was Shelby Barrett, unguarded, even smiling as she went toward a destiny which was to take her far afield. Her Californian days were to be brief, but charged with the chemistry which makes a future.

The Rancho, only a euphemistic name for a colony of rented houses, vaguely showed its prosperous roots

among the foliage up and down the hills. Above Shelby loomed the ox-bow tides of Eugene Fairchild's pretentious villa; just below her, equally pretentious, the wide-spread "cottages" of that Mrs. Nicholas, who commanded her friends to call her Nicko, invited to a warm bath and a vigorous rubdown at the hands of Nicko's maid.

Pleasantly tired with an afternoon in the saddle, lazily forgetting this morning's irritation, Shelby let her mind slide with unimportant thoughts. Perhaps she was thinking of tonight's dance. It would be fun to fluff around in the green evening gown she had bought, in a burst of extravagance, when they had stopped over at Los Angeles. She wanted to get away from hersey clothes, make her silver slipers do all sorts of steps to the silent saxophone music.

Plunkety-plunk-pon-plunk. The patter of rittins on sheepskin. Rusty's a wish-fulfillment had com-

posed the words in her head. A slow, nasal voice was singing in the accents which a Yankee uses when he tries to talk like a Southerner. Then the sound died, leaving a stillness where the materialistic mind reverts to phantoms. But the snatch of song had come from one of the bedroom doors opening on the patio.

The young girl sniffed defiance. Was the princely Wyatt given to music? Was he loitering now in the prize guest-room, which she had surrendered to His Highness, regarding himself with sentiment? Or perhaps he had employed a hired harper, after the fashion of the Pharaohs, to crouch by his bed, soothing him to sleep. Shelby paused, inventing sarcasms to heap on the head of this pumpered Easterner to whom she had given place by royal command. \*

Then she reached the door of the little room which Nicko had allotted her this morning, and opened it rather too hastily. The lights were

full on, squaring the picture. A tall young man sat on one of those boudoir benches which ladies occupy when they do their hair. But he wasn't doing his hair. Unconscious as Eden, he sat there in his B. V. D's.

Shelby started to back away, but her heel struck something. It was like one single movement, the way he turned, saw her, reached for a quilt, wrapped himself in an improvised toga. The banjo clanged to the floor.

"I beg your pardon." He had a hawk-like nose, handsome brown, and the mouth of a comedian. In that embarrassed second Shelby almost thought that he had contrived that costume to surprise and nauseate her.

"I beg yours," she said, and wondered if she giggled. But as she went down the corridor the Barrett temper put up its back, made her want to find Mrs. Nicholas and ask impertinent questions. This was the limit. To be

routed out of one room in the morning and another in the afternoon. I'll pack my trunks right now and go to the hotel, Shelby was storming, when she saw the outflung Barbara's long face thrust out of a door.

"What the devil is that man doing in my room?"

"Oh, that ain't your room, Miss Barrett."

"Not my room? Well, where do I live? Anywhere?"

"You're right in the same room you always was, Miss Barrett. We didn't have to move your things at all." Barbara swung upon a door; Shelby's baggage was in place, her silver toilet things on the bureau. The maid fluttered around, drawing the bath, laying rubber sheets across the chains-longes for the evening rub-down. And as she worked she talked, nothwithstanding, exercising her capacity as Nicko's unofficial social adjuster.

"I'm sorry I didn't catch you in





















going to architect the whole chess."

"Johnnie!"  
"Shelby!"  
A great deal of kissing, hugging, dancing around. They were both laughing with tears in their eyes.  
"Do you know, chuck," he confessed, "there was a time, not so long ago, when I was sort of yellow. I was a grocer, I know it, I boast that the old race-track was going to bust right in our faces. Didn't you, sometimes?"  
"I didn't let myself think," she said. "And see what it's brought us to, by not thinking!"  
"Lair!" he accused; "you're all ways thinking. Oh, say—He had looked over at the bed, seen the green dress. Where do we go from here? Big dance or something? All night whoopee? Night club, dance around, stay up till the cock crow home?"  
"Yes, Johnnie. Dance our feet off."

"Why not? Let's get in the fliv."

"This is the night Gene Fairchild's going to have a party. For an instant she lost her desire to go, but Johnnie's reply was not successful.

"We've gained, aren't we?"

"Why, yes, Johnnie, you want to."

"I'd dance on a griddle tonight, just to keep it hot. When do we start?"

"About 10 o'clock."

"Gerrand!"

"WHITE lamps on the high stone gateway guided them in as the young

Yatts came on the wings of fortune, to Eugene Fairchild's dance.

The cars were pushing slowly toward Fairchild's big front door, and Shelby came out of her dream to realize that, at the moment

Gene Fairchild had induced a great many people to come to his party.

The air, pungent with champagne, was shining hospitably from the ground floor to its peaked booms. Uniformed men

guided the traffic, one of them took charge of Johnnie's car. There were a great many liveried serv-

ants in the hall, indicating the ladies' cloak room and the men's.

"I'll go," Shelby heard Johnnie say this, and nothing more, as they separated.

Good, indeed. Among the ladies in the dressing-room upstairs she

met half a dozen Wyatt. Aunt Bettina, magnificent and dowdy in her well-known real lace, and Be-

lie and the fashionable lady she had learned was Estelle's sister,

Mr. Paxton Dornier, they gave somewhat the effect of shipwrecked mariners, clinging together on a raft, but being very pleasant to in-

terposing sharks.

However, they were there. Not only that when Shelby joined her husband in the hall she found

herself engaged in conversation with Grandpa Wyatt, a handsome, withered old thing, leaning on a mack-

in which Wyatt Fairness, dazzled by his extraordinarily high collar and supremely perfect tie, covered not reviewing the pageantry.

The Wyatts were there in full force, and they were seeing much.

"Hen," said Grandpa Wyatt, cracking dry lips. "We never saw anything like this, you know."

"Maybe we never will again," chuckled Johnnie.

"Hens," said Grandpa Wyatt, and allowed the dutiful Estelle to lead him and toward distant music.

"The wide lawn was enchanting with fairy lights and fanciful flames. At the center of the lawn, under the trees, people sat in groups, drinking Gene's champagne. Lat-

er doors were hurrying to serve them.

"One stood near the entrance, shaking hands, the perfect host, neither pompous nor subservient.

"When they came up, Gene was frankly delighted. 'Well, well! God you're a beauty.' Then he grinned, said a flash, and resumed his poker face."

"You're giving the hall of the century," she said.

"I'm glad to be coming along all right," he admitted. "And I hope you'll let me dance with you pretty soon."

Shelby and her fortunate husband danced together rapidly, keep-

ing to the center of the floor, so that the stag-line wouldn't cut in. They danced level, and Gene told Johnnie, in long, sweet waves of motion, it was interesting to have

him so near to the center of the dance, the nicest thing in the world, and that he thought that he had never so

dearly he broke into her dream with a rough exclamation.

"Look over your shoulder and see if

"He's passed by the Board of Censors. The royal seal, the rubber stamp, the baggage tag are on him. He's admitted. Can you believe it?"

Yet, said Shelby emphatically, just then a college boy, who was a little older than Shelby, perhaps, but his style of love-making had a caliph, undeveloped round. Circling the room, enjoying his steps, she looked over and counted the items in Gene's self-made welcome to Wyattsville.

Wyatt Fairness was awning a figure in ivory satin very close to her. Shelby almost touched the woman's elbow gloves; the magnificent string of pearls, a resplendent finery in the pitch of her head—then she looked up. Her sharp-edged eyes met Shelby's squarely without asking for recognition or receiving it.

The music had stopped now, the dancers two by two were strolling out toward the ladies on the lawn. Then the well-remembered woman came by on Wyatt Fairness's arm.

"Hello, Nicko," said Shelby, touching her long white gloves.

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He flipped into a chair, turning a wretched face to Shelby. "Give me some more coffee." When her nervous hand obeyed, he drank it down, sneezing hot

hollow tone, addressing Mr. Hill over the wire.

"But, Mr. Hill, I don't understand it that way yesterday."

"No, it won't inconvenience me at all."

"Then the crazy skeleton of a voice, smoothing through space, Mr. Hill had a great deal to say. What was it that made poor Johnnie so pale?"

An emphatic came to the pit of Shelby's stomach.

"That's only a detail, Mr. Hill," concluded Johnnie, with false brightness. "Then he hurried and turned a wretched face to Shelby."

"He flopped into a chair. 'Give me some more coffee. When her nervous hand obeyed, he drank it down, sneezing hot

"I'll say it's just a matter of form," he broke out bitterly. "I knew hell gum the cards."

"He says it can't take over the property unless it's title free. Just a matter of form, huh? They've given me till Tuesday to lift that mortgage. Don't you see me raising ten thousand dollars in three days?"

"—She sat gazing at the appalling sum. 'Johnnie, can't people build a town with a mortgage on it?'

"Vinton and Hill can't, it seems. Just a matter of form, huh? They've given me till Tuesday to lift that mortgage. Don't you see me raising ten thousand dollars in three days?"

"But it isn't all right," he insisted savagely. "What have we got to do with it? We agreed to keep it for a crisis."

"We have, perfectly distracted, fishing for cigars, stroking them on the floor. 'The brood's

"I reckon not, Gene."

"We've just had a lucky break. We're prosperous now. A big syndicate has taken over Johnnie's tract. They're going to build a village there. And they've made Johnnie president."

"That's fine," said Gene heartily. "Fine."

She even thanked him for his offer, and he accepted her thanks gravely. She had a feeling of escape by a hand's breadth. At his gesture, she turned stiffly now, she thoroughly realized what his generous proposal was possibly but.

But Gene Fairchild, who boasted that he could buy his way in any town, then he wasn't born yesterday. She had heard of their investments.

"How?" she asked, and Gene, thinking her curiously for the McCull, turned her over to Gene's lucky day for me! I don't know what I had said yesterday.

"RIGHT" o'clock breakfast might have been dull for they hadn't come home from the dance till after three. But they had awakened early in a blaze of excitement; their adventure was under way. This was the day of days. Now they were at breakfast, for Johnnie must catch the nine-fifteen to make connections with the Albany train. This would give him two hours in New York to meet the lawyers and sign up.

"The telephone rang. Shelby, a little more than the day's misadventures, was the first to answer it. 'Hello, Vinton and Hill speaking. Said a crackly voice, the kind that Mr. Hill would have."

"Could I speak to Mr. Wyatt?"

"Mr. Hill wants to talk to you."

"What?" she asked, and she began to sink lower and lower it sank, sympathetic to Johnnie's

"Johnnie and I have plenty." It sounded lame.

"Not for Wyattsville. Money's my business, you know. I can't put you in the way of something."

"With a slight distance for him."

"I wouldn't bother you with that, but my eye on the day's misadventures, was the first to answer it."

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